

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-8 (canceled)

9. (Previously Amended) A guide for fastening to an ultrasonic probe, said probe operative for transmitting signals from said probe's proximal end through a patient's body for the purpose of creating an image; said guide comprising:

at least one support configured to releasably attach to a proximal end of said probe, said support having a longitudinal seating area for positioning a rod therein;

a latch configured to temporarily hold said rod in fixed position with respect to said patient so that a proximal end of said rod will follow a known trajectory with respect to a generated image of said patient's body; said latch configured to be fitted over said rod where said rod is seated in said seating area, said latch comprising a tapered wedge portion configured to be positioned below a seated rod; and

a tab on said latch operable for allowing said latch to release said rod.

10. (Original) The guide of claim 9 wherein said latch is positioned perpendicular to said seating area and wherein said latch slides across said seating area.

11. (Original) The guide of claim 9 wherein said support comprises:
a bracket for mating to said probe at said proximal end of said probe, and
at least one pivot point for allowing said guide to release from said bracket.

12. (Previously Presented) The guide of claim 9 wherein said latch comprises:
an overhang portion for positioning above said rod when said rod is in said seating area, said overhang portion preventing said rod from becoming disengaged from said guide without first moving said latch to its open position.

13. (Canceled)

14. (Previously Presented) The guide of claim 9 wherein said latch comprises:
a flexible tab for preventing said latch from moving from its closed to its open position.

15. (Previously Presented) The guide of claim 14 wherein said moving is perpendicular to said seated rod.

16. (Previously Amended) A method of releasably attaching a medical device to a probe, said method comprising:

positioning said medical device along a longitudinal axis of said probe;

clamping said medical device with respect to said probe so that an angle of attack of said clamped medical device remains constant with respect to a proximal end of said probe, said clamping controlled at least in part by a slidably coupled latch having a dimension keyed to a diameter of said medical device, wherein said slidably coupled latch comprises an upper surface and a lower surface, said lower surface including a wedge portion which tapers upward to define said dimension;

generating at least one image of structures below the surface of an object over which said proximal end of said probe moves, said image generation resulting at least in part from signals emitted from said proximate end of said probe;

sliding a proximal end of said clamped medical device toward said surface of said object along a trajectory predictable as a result of said generated image;

continuing to slide said proximal end of said clamped medical device along said trajectory to a position below said surface of said object; and

releasing said clamped positioned medical device from said probe while said proximal end of said medical device remains positioned below said surface of said object.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16 wherein said positioning comprises:
inserting said medical device into a guide attached to said proximal end of said probe.

18. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 17 wherein said guide is configured to define a closing angle with respect to said proximal end of said probe and wherein said trajectory is predictable at least in part by said closing angle.

19. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 18 wherein said closing angle corresponds to a target depth of said positioned medical device below said surface of said object.

20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 17 wherein said guide is releasably connected to said probe.

21. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein said latch is positioned transverse to said longitudinal axis.

22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein at least a portion of said latch contains a ramp.

23. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein said medical device has a round cross-section.

24-34 (Canceled)

35. (Previously Amended) A method for releasably attaching a needle to a proximal end of an image generating probe, said method comprising:
positioning a guide support bracket at said proximal end of said probe, said guide support bracket configured to accept, one at a time, a plurality of needle guides each having either a different angle of attack or accepting a different gauge needle;
selecting a needle guide having a particular angle of attack with respect to said proximal end of said probe, said selected needle guide accepting a particular gauge;
releasably attaching said selected needle guide to said attached bracket; and
releasably attaching a needle to said attached needle guide by sliding a clamping mechanism within said selected one of said needle guides so that the longitudinal axis of said needle lies along a longitudinal axis of said selected one of said needle guides, said needle having said particular gauge.

36. (Original) The method of claim 35 further comprising:
while said needle is releasably attached to said needle guide, sliding the proximal end of said needle toward said proximal end of said probe, said needle following said angle of attack to a point under the skin of a patient to said focal point.

37. (Original) The method of claim 36 further comprising:
when said needle has been positioned under the skin of said patient, releasing said

needle from said needle guide so that said probe can be removed while said needle remains positioned under said skin.

38. (Original) The method of claim 35 wherein said selecting comprises:
removing said needle guide from a plurality of needle guides of like gauge but having different angles of attacks, said plurality of needle guides being held by a common bond.